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THE ARMY AS A CAREER.

BY BRIGADIER-GENERAL WILLIAM H. CARTER, U.S.A.

IN a country under whose flag enormous fortunes have become the rule, and under whose laws protection is guaranteed to vast aggregations of capital in single families, public opinion should demand from the members of these families in return some participation in the government beyond the mere payment of taxes. It is true that the number of desirable appointive offices has become extremely small because of the constant extension of the civil-service system, but there still remain many opportunities, of which the sons of the wealthy do not avail themselves, for rendering public service to the nation. The Army and the Navy, through the medium of the national Academies, are always open to a considerable number, and many do take advantage of the educational facilities furnished by these institutions; but, with few exceptions, they resign before opportunities for distinction have arrived. Many of the young men of wealth who have thus quitted an honorable service which abounds in fine traditions, have taken up an active business or professional career. Others have sacrificed their trained talents to the idle life of a leisure set, which, in America, has few resources worthy of men of their education and character. If such men should seek the service in considerable numbers, they would not only honor their families by so doing, but here and there opportunities for distinction would come to some, whose names would be inscribed with credit upon the pages of the nation's history. The satisfaction to be derived from the social successes of the idle rich is as naught compared to the pride which comes of having rendered the state some gallant or useful service.

Every man whose titles to property are confirmed and protected by the laws of nation or state should not only be ready to

take part in its defence in war, but should regard it as a solemn obligation to fit himself properly for this duty by service in peace, at least for a time, in the Army, the Navy or the National Guard. In any event, the law should forbid the hiring of substitutes in time of war, for the whole Constitution rests upon the basic theory that the militia, composed of every able-bodied citizen, stands as the bulwark of the Republic.

In the Army, as in the Navy, there are representatives of many families which have sent sons of every generation into one or the other, and sometimes both, of the services, in accordance with the old British custom. Almost without exception, these sons may be counted upon for loyal and gallant services because of personal characteristics, as well as pride in the records of their families. Respect for the cloth is usually bred in the bone of these men, and they value the privilege of following in their fathers' footsteps beyond the opportunity of amassing mere material gain.

In a nation so much given to genealogical research, in the effort to locate ancestors who have rendered the nation some service, it is indeed remarkable that so many of the descendants are entirely content with the work of their forebears, and oblivious to the fact that they too might do something for the country. The coveted privilege of membership in one of the numerous patriotic societies seems to satisfy the ambition of too many able-bodied, well-educated descendants of virile ancestors.

In the British and several European armies, the pay of officers has been purposely kept so small as to make it practically impossible to live in the service without a private income. The British articles of war, somewhat amended, and the customs of the British service were commended for adoption by Washington and his Continentals, because they were familiar to so many who had served with the colors before the Declaration of Independence. But, from the very first, Washington urged that, to secure and retain the services of reputable and desirable gentlemen, Congress should provide officers with enough pay to make it unnecessary for them to use up their private means or to adopt makeshifts to eke out scanty allowances.

The British nobility and landed gentry ever have not only given of their best blood to the army, but, as a voluntary contribution to the state, they have habitually supplied the greater part

of the funds necessary for the support of the large body of officers. This burden has always been accepted as a patriotic duty to the Crown; and, through several centuries, these high-born gentlemen, although averse to association with those engaged in trade, have freely risked and often sacrificed their lives in protecting the rights of some distant and obscure trader over whom floated the British flag.

Had the Russian royal family, the nobility and the first citizens of the Empire stood patriotically together, and volunteered their services in the recent war in the Orient, to the same extent as corresponding classes of Great Britain did in the South-African War, there might have been a different tale to tell in Manchuria. Had this course been followed, it seems impossible that the revolution at home could have been successfully launched at so critical a period. The creation of a Russian national spirit, demanding moral and financial support of the armies in the field, beyond all other considerations, would have given heart to the brave men who for nearly eighteen months stood against the Japanese nation, all classes of which were actuated by a common impulse having for its object the halting of the advance of the Russians and their eventual ejection from Korea and Manchuria.

Strange to say, in America, those who by reason of accumulations of property have assumed the rôle of the leisure class and have more or less association with that British element which supplies its scions to the Army, Navy and Civil Service, seldom or never consider the propriety of devoting themselves or their sons to the public service, unless it be as ambassadors or ministers at foreign courts.

The very excesses of a few social reporters and hysterical journals have had their natural result in putting on the defensive the great body of respectable editorial writers, who, in future, as they have done in the past, will go on creating and preserving a public opinion that will hold far above mere pecuniary gain the successful work of the statesman, the jurist, the soldier and the sailor. It is no crime to be rich; but the acquisition of wealth does not release the possessor from the duties of citizenship—service at the primaries, the ballot-box, and, when necessary, in the forefront of battle.

In all countries which maintain regular armies, the social

position of officers is never questioned except on personal and individual grounds. During all the early years of the Republic, no important social function was considered a success which did not include in its company the available representative members of the Army and Navy. In *ante bellum* days of the old army, officers and their families constituted no small part of the principal social set at the nation's capital. Some slight change has taken place in this respect, and foreigners have frequently expressed surprise at the small participation of the Army and Navy in social affairs, as compared to the influence exercised by members of the two services in the capitals of England and Europe. The influx of wealthy families and the excessive cost of living have unquestionably compelled the families of many excellent and talented public officials, civil and military, to avoid a society in which to go the pace means debt, social or pecuniary.

The old order of service in the Army, which for a century guarded the frontiers and made possible the upbuilding of a thriving empire in the "Great American Desert," has completely passed away. The excitement and interest of the trail, the chase and Indian combat; the matching of the white man's intellect against the red man's stratagem and backwoods lore, have now all given way to a new field of duty which encircles the globe. With this ever-widening field of action has come need of more careful study and training, through all the grades; for, time and again since the nation assumed the rôle of a World Power, there has been thrust upon junior subalterns the determination of grave questions involving diplomacy, commerce and the law, international, civil and criminal.

A correct decision, with prompt and forceful action, may tide over many grave emergencies, which are soon forgotten, whilst an honest error may live to mar a record through a lifetime of loyal service. These are the chances that every candidate for a military career must needs take. In taking these professional risks, the young officer, if he anticipates a contented life, must accept the general rule and be satisfied with a consciousness of duty honestly performed as the highest reward that will come in the majority of cases. If, perchance, others of not greater merit be called for important service when he had hoped to be selected, he must needs nerve himself against the sting of envy, else it

may poison his mind and inspire him with discontent. The demands of duty seldom fit those of convenience.

Despite the small number of chances of obtaining high rank, and the assured prospects of frequent hardships and deprivations, there has never been a time when reputable candidates in abundance were not in waiting for commissions in the Army.

The pay of an officer, which at best furnishes but a modest support, has recently lost much of its purchasing power, because of the unexampled prosperity and a general rise in prices throughout the country. This likewise affects unfavorably all persons whose salaries are fixed by law or otherwise. If the officer has a family dependent upon him and he is ordered to duty out of the country, he is embarrassed by unusual and comparatively excessive expenses. Should his orders take him to the Orient, the time required in mail communications becomes a serious and unhappy factor, if it be necessary, as is so often the case, for the family to remain at home.

In England and her possessions and on the Continent of Europe special consideration is shown to officers who are obliged to travel, and, until the recent rate bill was passed, American railways generally followed the custom of granting half-rates for families of officers on their journeys back and forth across the continent, in connection with duty in Hawaii and the Orient. This was in the nature of a contribution to the nation, to assist public officials whose pay was fixed by law many years before the army sailed away to Manila.

Very few citizens are aware that officers are required to pay all their living expenses. Some thirty-odd years ago, the present pay-table was adopted in lieu of all allowances, except fuel. This allowance was continued, because of the possible unfairness to officers stationed at isolated posts in the far North and compelled to buy enormous quantities of fuel. This continuance was considered as part of the implied agreement in fixing the rates of pay for all grades. In a spasm of economy, some years after the adoption of the rates of pay, Congress took away the fuel allowance without compensatory advantage of any kind. It was not altogether the actual reduction of pay by this move that appeared unjust, but the injection of inequality into the schedule, as between those serving in the far South and those stationed along the Canadian border and in Alaska.

Promotion in the Army under normal conditions is usually extremely slow. With all the losses incident to the war with Spain, the Chinese Expedition and the Philippine campaigns, promotion has not been so fast but that officers of from thirty to thirty-five years' service are still waiting for the eagles which carry with them the command of regiments. For the young lieutenants recently commissioned, the climb upwards looks interminable, but the element of chance usually plays a prominent part in keeping up an average movement towards the top.

The methods of filling vacancies in the lowest grade of commissioned officers is in accord with the American theory that no door of public employment should be closed to any man. In the old army, promotions from the ranks followed the British custom, and for a hundred years the commission was available for meritorious non-commissioned officers who had proven their courage and their ability to command men, this although the nation possessed a military academy of the most democratic kind, acknowledged to be the equal of any in the world. Not satisfied with this open door, Congress enacted legislation under which any private of two years' service and within the age limit may compete for a commission in an examination which requires no greater ability than is called for by the entrance examination at the West Point Military Academy. The competitor for a commission may never have commanded a squad; in fact, he may be in a staff department and never have attended a drill or performed any duty with the line, in which he must be commissioned, if at all.

The law was intended to open the door for commissions to all men without necessity for the approval of their immediate commanding officers. Many excellent young men have enlisted in order to secure commissions, and, having gained them, are proving themselves worthy in every way. Many misfits have resulted from too free a construction of the statute; and, altogether, the real object of the law—to elevate the character of the whole personnel of the ranks—has not been realized in the slightest degree. On the contrary, the presence in the ranks of young men whose sole object is to obtain a commission, and who generally select the organization in which they are to serve with special reference to the probability of being rapidly advanced to the grade of non-commissioned officer, has a disheartening effect

upon other men, particularly upon the sterling old non-commissioned officers who, through defective education or over-age, are not qualified to compete in the examinations.

Notwithstanding the many excellent officers in the Army who have gained their commissions under the new law, it may be said, without reflection upon their merits, that every one of them would have been more accomplished professionally had he been given the advantage of the West Point course. Herein lies the reason for the suggestion for keeping open the door to a commission through the ranks, and at the same time making full use of the West Point training which has given the country a Grant, a Sherman, a Sheridan and a host of trained officers of lesser fame.

Through the generosity of Congress, the capacity of West Point has been largely increased. It would be to the great advantage of the individual, as well as of the service as a whole, if all the young candidates, say from eighteen to twenty-three years of age, who are in the ranks for commissions should be sent to the Military Academy as additional cadets, to the limit of the accommodations, and if the direct promotions to the grade of second lieutenant should be reserved for the few cases of meritorious non-commissioned officers who may prove in action their courage and ability to control men under fire.

With all the advantages and all the drawbacks weighed in the balance, there remains a goodly margin in favor of the Army as a career for a man adapted to the profession of arms. It is entirely possible for a young man to live with decency and credit upon his pay, but the possession of a small additional income may remove the worry incident to extraordinary and unforeseen contingencies. There are occasions when, as public officials, both Army and Navy officers become involved in heavy expenses for entertainment, which in justice should be met from the public purse. It is to their credit that they generally measure up to such occasions like gentlemen, even though their doing so subsequently involve them in unpalatable economy.

Altogether, whether in the government of Indian or Oriental tribes, in the fair and patient handling of angry mobs, in the tender nursing of earthquake sufferers or in the supreme test of battle, the Army has ever conducted itself in a way that deserves well of the country.

WILLIAM H. CARTER.